

## BLACK BACKGROUNDS FOR BUTTERFLIES.

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It is the common practice of entomologists to arrange collections of insects in boxes lined with white paper. Against such a background the darker specimens stand out in sharp relief, and the effect is certainly pleasing. With no expectation of bringing about the general abandonment of this practice, but merely with a view to introducing a useful alternative, I submit these notes on the advantages attending the use of black backgrounds.

Specimens of lepidoptera exposed to strong light are almost sure to fade, and every entomologist will recall museum collections in which many of the species are quite misrepresented by the bleached examples on view. I think it is generally recognized that the white paper behind the specimens, acting as a reflector, materially hastens the fading process. Indeed it has been found that lepidoptera displayed in any of the various patent mounts in which the wings are closely applied to a white surface keep their colors appreciably longer than those elevated on pins above the bottom of a white-lined case. In the patent mounts the reflector is smothered so far as its action on the specimens is concerned.

The reflection from white backgrounds is fatiguing to the eyes of anyone who has occasion to examine closely a long series of specimens. This is a more serious difficulty, since it renders unnecessarily wearisome the study of any collection kept in white-lined drawers or boxes. The use of tints interferes with the correct analysis of the colors of the specimens. If white is to be abandoned, the obvious substitute is black.

For black backgrounds I have used a good quality of coated paper, which may be bought from dealers in school supplies in sheets measuring  $24 \times 20$  inches. The price is four cents per sheet. This paper has a slight gloss, but the objections to this are offset by the hard, smooth quality of the surface. It may not prove to be very durable, for coated papers are apt to be disappointing in this respect. A more expensive paper might be found which would give longer service.

Specimens displayed against the black background look well, the white and yellow butterflies in particular making a fine appearance. Dark species are not unduly obscured. There is no fatiguing glare, and the risk of damage to valuable specimens through exposure to light is considerably diminished.